



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

September 2000



Flood of memories. This aerial view from the city of Franklin depicts some of the devastation experienced in the 48-locality disaster area.

Floyd impact still felt one year later

By Bob Lambert, VDEM Reservist

One year ago, a weakened Hurricane Floyd dumped record-breaking amounts of rain on Southeastern Virginia already saturated less than two weeks earlier by Hurricane Dennis.

As much as 20 inches of rain fell as the storm swept inland across a 75-mile swath in the largely rural, flat countryside. In all, the final presidential disaster declaration covered 48 jurisdictions. Four individuals lost their lives. Damage estimates exceeded \$255 million.

Most individuals and businesses have now recovered from the devastating effects of Floyd. Three quarters of the 202 businesses damaged in the city of Franklin have returned and much of the downtown has been repaired.

For others, however, life still hasn't returned to normal. Some families in Southampton County are hoping to have permanent housing by early next year.

"Much has been done since Floyd, but we haven't closed the books yet," says VDEM State Coordinator Michael Cline.

Federal and state disaster programs provided more than \$30 million in relief funds, including \$4.2 million in Individual and Family Grants, \$4.6 million in emergency housing and \$22.3 million for Small Business Administration loans.

FEMA approved approximately \$24 million for infrastructure repairs. Of the \$16 million approved for localities, about 70 percent has been distributed. About 50 percent of the \$7 million slated for state projects has been disbursed. Most of the rest is for projects awaiting completion.

While the September hurricane put preparedness to the test, the challenge is to maintain readiness for the next incident.

"We and local government learned more about the disaster assistance process," says VDEM Director of Recovery and Administration Harry Colestock.
(continued on page 4)



Dusting off the dream. A lot of scrubbing, repainting and rebuilding have helped return many affected communities to a state of normalcy (FEMA News Photo by Liz Roll).

EMs go “back to school” to promote safety

By Bob Lambert, VDEM Reservist



As America's youth begin another school year, educators and emergency managers from across the Commonwealth are also returning to the classroom to learn how to effectively plan for and respond to violent incidents in our schools.

When Governor Jim Gilmore created the 4 SAFE VA initiative in May 1999, the memory of the

Columbine High School tragedy was still fresh. More than a year later, Columbine is still the rallying cry as emergency managers view these incidents in the context of the community at large.

Though often in a unique position to facilitate coordination between schools, law enforcement and other organizations, local emergency managers have only recently begun to make serious inroads into local schools to address this critical issue. A VDEM survey of emergency managers conducted earlier this year revealed that, while 85 percent of respondents thought school safety planning was important, only 54 percent actually were involved with preparedness.

So far, more than 3,000 local school and public safety officials have received school safety training under the 4 SAFE VA program. As part of the effort, some 90 individuals attended four school safety workshops provided last spring by VDEM for local emergency management coordinators.

In mid-August, a “focus group” of about 20 state and local school and public safety officials met to outline the next phase of training. The consensus was:

- Local school and public safety officials should work together as a team to establish a well-coordinated school safety program and be prepared to respond to critical incidents.
- Regional workshops with representatives from local school districts should serve as the basis for providing sessions in each school. The emphasis will be on district-level training.
- School officials should receive training on the Incident Command System, which addresses their concerns about losing their “span of control” and “role ambiguity” issues.

Participants emphasized that response to an incident at a school, either public or private, should be part of a community's overall emergency response plan. Greater involvement of educators in planning and training ahead of time will help close the gap.

“When you have a crisis that goes beyond the school house door, you have to know how to access to the emergency management system in your community,” said VDEM Assistant State Coordinator for Operations Ralph Jones.

The group recommended that representatives from the Department of Education, Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, Virginia State Police, Department of Criminal Justice Services and VDEM flesh out the training package and determine how it will be delivered. The designation of a lead agency also needs to be determined.

The Department of Criminal Justice System's Center for School Safety is expected to have an important coordination role in the program.

Involved agencies are scheduled to meet Sept. 12 and a pilot workshop has been tentatively scheduled for November. All the parties agree that preparation is an essential element of the lesson plan for school safety.

As Arlene Cundiff of the Virginia Department of Education says, “Five minutes before the party is not the time to learn to dance.”

For additional information, contact Bill Edmonson, VDEM Preparedness and Mitigation Division, (804) 897-6500, ext. 6527, or e-mail: wedmonson@vdem.state.va.us.

Teaching kids to “master” their disaster destiny

By Rohn Brown, VDEM Public Affairs Outreach Coordinator

For years, children across the country learned “Stop, Drop and Roll.” It is a given that elementary school students will learn about fire prevention.

What about disaster safety and education? Where can teachers get quality resources to teach about hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes? The answer is “Masters of Disaster.”

Developed by the American Red Cross, “Masters of Disaster” is a curriculum that helps teachers integrate disaster preparedness, safety and disaster science into core subjects such as language arts, math, science and social studies.

For example, a teacher can show how to plot latitude and longitude on a map by using the curriculum's lesson on how to track a hurricane. Another teacher may want to use floods to help explain the functions of the water cycle.

Three ready-to-use kits designed for grades K-2, 3-5 and 6-8 include classroom activities, lesson plans, posters, stickers, certificates and a video. To assist teachers, a matrix helps to align the National Education Standards with the “Masters of Disaster” lesson plans. The American Red Cross is working on a similar matrix for the Virginia Standards of Learning.

The “Masters of Disasters” curriculum is a proven product for teachers and educators. In pilot tests in 23 states as well as Guam and Puerto Rico, teachers were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the curriculum and noted that their students found the activities and lessons interesting, educational and fun!

“Masters of Disaster” kits are available through local American Red Cross Chapters across Virginia at a cost of \$45 for each kit. For the location of your closest American Red Cross Chapter or for more information on “Masters of Disaster,” visit their Web site at www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/.



'Basics' training provides firm foundation

By Thomas Jordan
Technological Hazards Division

Not long ago, a train derailed in a southern town causing two large rail cars full of a flammable gas to become detached from the train. Local police and fire departments responded to the accident and the townspeople thought that everything was safe.

Two days later, one of the tank cars ruptured. The resulting explosion killed 16 people, injured 43 and destroyed parts of the downtown area. A number of the fatalities and injured were from the fire and police departments.

In the months that followed, many wondered what happened. Some blamed the fire department. Others blamed the railroad workers. However, for the most part, nobody really understood why this tragic accident occurred.

A federal agency analysis of the incident noted that there were great weaknesses in the fire department's training and indicated many of the casualties could have been avoided with better training.

In public safety and emergency services, training is almost as routine as driving a car. Day in and day out at fire stations and rescue squads across the nation, emergency



response personnel train on how to drive emergency apparatus, lay hose lines, splint bones and perform CPR. However, very few train on "The Basics."

"The Basics" are those skills that response personnel can resort to when all else fails. "The Basics" help keep response personnel safe when everything bad happens; lead them through a maze of complex technology and untested tactics; and communicate with others.

After everything else has come to pass, "The Basics" help responders know where they fit in during an incident. In Virginia, hazardous materials response is taught through a 12-class, multi-level training program with three distinct areas of training. Four of these courses are devoted to "The Basics."

"The Basics" comprise the first level of training and response called defensive tactics. The *Hazardous Materials First Responder - Awareness* course teaches responders to look at an incident for signs of possible hazmat involvement.

They learn to recognize hazardous materials and activate the hazardous materials response system. They are also taught how to use available information to help decide how best to protect the public. Interaction with the incident at this level is to isolate the hazard, deny access to the scene and to call for help.

The next course in the defensive tactics level is called *Hazardous Materials First Responder - Operations*. Here, responders begin learning to assess hazmat incidents. Using models for material behavior and incident analysis, they can begin to predict where the material may go and how best to control its movement.

At this level, responders may establish control zones, implement vapor suppression or dispersion, or even limit flow of material by digging trenches or damming small streams. Responder interaction with the incident includes isolating the hazard, denying access to the scene, calling for help, assessing the incident in terms of outcome and harm, and limiting movement of these materials to areas that will pose less harm for the public.

"The Basics" taught at this level play a major role in the success of the hazmat response system. A firm grasp of these techniques helps ensure that an incident will progress in a positive fashion.

If first responders don't use "The Basics," higher levels of hazardous materials response break down. If these tasks are not performed before a regional hazmat team arrives at an incident, the team must then perform these assignments instead of mitigating the incident. Without the help of first responders, most specialized response teams could not function effectively.

"The Basics" are the key to a safe and effective hazardous materials response program. By mastering them, first responders position themselves as the cornerstone of Virginia's hazardous materials response system. Have you and your agency mastered "The Basics"?

Danville readiness receives national nod

Danville's Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is drawing national attention as a finalist for the Chemical Education Foundation's Community Chemical Product Stewardship Award.

Chaired by the Danville Department of Emergency Services, the program is one of 29 finalists nationwide and the only one from Virginia. The winner and runners-up are to be announced at the Sept. 14, 2000, National Association of Chemical Distributor's Seminar and Trade Show.

In nominating the LEPC for the award, Joe Acker, president of Hickson DanChem Corp., praised workshops Danville conducted for local industry, business and citizens on chemical emergency response, risk management, hazmat awareness and joint exercises. A major success in the awareness program was a joint Danville-Pittsylvania County LEPCs and private industry disaster drill at the Hickson DanChem plant. Located just across a creek that serves as the Danville city line, the plant depends on the city for emergency response services.

"The two LEPCs worked together with private industry," says Danville Director of Emergency Services Douglas R. Young. "It really enhanced the working relationships between jurisdictions, brought together local industry and local government, and strengthened our credibility. VDEM participation strengthened that connection too."

Check out Doug Young's profile on our Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/emupdate to learn more about him and Danville's emergency management program.



Training Calendar

Emergency Management

Coordinator's Briefing
September 14/Charlottesville

Effective Communication
September 19-21/Richmond

Emergency Planning Workshop
October 11-13/Charlottesville

Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt
October 17-19/Roanoke

Basic Public Information Officer
October 25-27/Charlottesville

**Hazardous Weather and Flooding
Prep.** - October 31/Charlottesville

Search and Rescue

Managing Search Operations
September 23-24 (I)/Charlottesville
October 14-15 (II)/Charlottesville

SAR 1st Responder
September 16-17/Stafford County
SAR Council/Mgmt Conference
October 21/Richmond
GSAR (I)—October 27-29/Marion

Reservist Training

**Rapid Assessment Workbook
Overview**—September 14/Richmond

**Info & Planning Workshop/
VEOC Tabletop**
October 3/Richmond

Reservist Program Orientation
October 12/Richmond

Lessons Learned Workshop
October 17/Roanoke

Med-Flight Procedures/Plotting
October 26 & 27/Richmond

Technological Hazards

Hazmat Planning and Mgmt.
September 25-27/Va. Beach

**Public Safety Response to
Terrorism—Tactical**
September 25-27/Va. Beach

Hazmat Technician
October 16-27/Ashland

Floyd Anniversary (continued from page 1)

"Federal and state disaster programs can help buffer the immediate effects of a disaster," says Colestock. "However, involvement of the local community in emergency management makes a huge difference in dealing with a disaster effectively."

For example, the city of Suffolk initiated a program involving local government officials, businesses and community groups. When the hurricane struck, the Suffolk Disaster Recovery Task Force was ready.

"Floyd brought home the importance of citizens helping themselves and their own communities," Cline says.

Va. Tech breaks new ground

As the new millenium dawned, Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech) made some waves of its own by establishing the Earthquake Engineering Center for the Southeastern United States (ECSUS).

ECSUS is actively involved in projects that address earthquake-related problems of importance to regional state governments, national research laboratories and the private sector.

The interdisciplinary team of Virginia Tech researchers possesses expertise in geotechnical and structural earthquake engineering, earthquake seismology, strong ground-motion modeling, seismic hazard assessment, geographic information systems application and earthquake response planning and mitigation. ECSUS' primary roles are to:

- ☐ Perform basic and applied earthquake engineering research
- ☐ Manage seismic technology transfer to the southeastern region
- ☐ Promote continued evolution of regional building codes
- ☐ Disseminate new finds to the regional engineering community
- ☐ Act as a regional earthquake data resource center
- ☐ Provide a unified "voice" for regional earthquake issues

For more information, contact Martin Chapman or James Martin at (540) 231-6635 or on the Web at <http://ecsus.ce.vt.edu>.
(Compiled from the *Natural Hazards Observer*, July 2000)

New book lays down the law

The *Virginia State Fire, EMS and Emergency Related Laws* book released earlier this year offers "one-stop shopping" for Code of Virginia statutes on state fire, emergency medical services, emergency management, disaster and forest fire laws. A collaborative effort between five involved state agencies (including VDEM), it is the first comprehensive publication of such detail in the state. It is available through the Virginia Department of Fire Programs Bookstore at a cost of \$29 by calling (804) 371-0271.



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